

Name: **Cow Butte Central WY-030-16N90W34-2012, a subunit of Wild Horse Basin WYO-030-408**

**FORM 1**

**Documentation of BLM Wilderness Inventory Findings on Record**

**1. Is there existing BLM wilderness inventory information on all or part of this area?**

No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes   x   (if yes, and if more than one area is within the area, list the names of those areas):

a) **Inventory Source:**   Wild Horse Basin  

b) **Inventory Area Name(s)/Number(s):**   Wild Horse Intensive Inventory  

c) **Map Name(s)/Number(s):**   Wild Horse Basin; WY-030-048  

d) **BLM District (s)/Field Office(s):**   Rawlins Field Office  

**2. BLM Inventory Finds on Record:**

Existing inventory information regarding wilderness characteristics (if more than one BLM inventory area is associated with the area, list each area and answer each question individually for each inventory area):

Inventory Source:

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Area #/Name	Sufficient Size? Yes/No (acres)	Naturalness? Yes/No	Outstanding Solitude? Yes/No	Outstanding Primitive & Unconfined Recreation? Yes/No	Supplemental Values? Yes/No
Wild Horse Basin WYW-030-408	Yes (375,000 acres)	No	No	No	No

## **FORM 2**

### **Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics**

a. Area Number/Name **Cow Butte Central WY-030-16N90W34-2012, a subunit of Wild Horse Basin WYO-030-408** Acreage 30978.07

(1) Is the area of sufficient size?

Yes ☒X\_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the boundaries of the area (roads, property lines, etc.). If the area meets one of the exceptions to the size criterion, check "Yes" and describe the exception. If more than one inventory area is involved, list the acres in each and evaluate each area/sub-area separately. In completing steps (1) – (5), use additional space as necessary.

The unit is irregularly shaped. The unit is bound to the west and northwest by state land and a 50 foot wide pipeline disturbance with Rawlins Field Office right-of-way number WYW-0320238 and WYW-21024. The unit is bound northeast of the northwest state section by a Class 3 Light Duty Road with aggregate surface maintained by industry and permitted under the Rawlins Field Office WYW-109454X unit. The unit is bound to the north on the west side by BLM Road 3308, a.k.a. Cow Butte Road. The unit is bound to the north on the east side by BLM Road 3312, a.k.a. Rendle Butte Road, as well as private and state land. The unit is bound on the southeast by private land and by County Road 503, a.k.a. Cherokee Road. The unit is bound to the south by BLM Road 3314, a.k.a. Cherokee Road, as well as a state section, with a cut-out in the southeast for a Class 3 Light Duty Road of aggregate surface maintained by industry.

See **Cow Butte Outlier WY-030-16N91W34-2012, a subunit of Wild Horse Basin WYO-030-408.**

**DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT CONDITIONS:** The Cow Butte area under consideration is 30978.07 acres of BLM public land. It is located within the following townships: Township 16, Range 91, Section 35; Township 15, Range 91, Sections 1-4, 10-15, and 23-24; Township 15, Range 89, Sections 4-7; Township 15, Range 90, Sections 1-12, 14-15, 17-19, and 22-23; Township 16, Range 90, Sections 1, 11, 12-15, and 21-35; Township 16, Range 89, Sections 6-8, 18, 26-29, and 31-33. The topography consists, primarily, of rolling prairie, buttes, hills, and drainages created by Wild Cow Creek and the Middle Fork and South Fork tributaries. Elevation ranges from 7,567 feet on the hilltops above the drainages to 6,800 feet at the bottom of the drainages. The dominant vegetation cover is mountain big sagebrush on the slopes and uplands of the unit and wet meadow cover along creeks and draws. The primary land use is livestock grazing. Among range improvements, fences occur throughout the area as well as 35 reservoirs, ten water wells, and one spring. The area has 27 gas wells. The area also contains a number of primitive routes accessible only by 4wd vehicles. The primary, dispersed recreational activity in the area is hunting.

(2) Does the area appear to be natural?

Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A ☐

Description: The 229.09 miles of primitive routes (i.e., unimproved roads and two-track trails) and 6.68 miles of wilderness inventory roads (i.e., well access roads) detract from the unit's naturalness. Examples of these primitive routes and wilderness inventory roads are demonstrated in photos 1, 3, and 8-16. When hiking across the Cow Butte Central Unit, the casual observer cannot escape the constant view of primitive routes. These primitive routes create noticeable linear intrusions and disturbances that interrupt the experience of any wilderness character briefly encountered in areas untrammelled by the works of man.

The area contains 24 oil and gas wells throughout the Cow Butte Central Unit (see example in Photo 2). These oil and gas installations within the unit represent permanent improvements and loss of primeval character. When examining the status of the oil and gas wells, twelve of these wells are permanently abandoned, one has a subsequent report of abandonment, two are temporarily abandoned, two are flowing, four have expired permits, two have shut-in status, and one well is spudded. Despite the variation in status, these wells remain as existing installations that detract from the naturalness and are substantially noticeable to the casual observer while hiking through the unit. All wells, which are not abandoned, are managed as active wells and receive commercial vehicle traffic for periodic maintenance. This traffic would interrupt the casual observer's experience of wilderness character due to road dust plumes and the contrast between the white coloration of these vehicles moving across the tan, brown, and olive landscape. Well pads do not receive final reclamation approval until they have been plugged and abandoned. Visual contrasts created by surface disturbances, including well pad turn-arounds, soil exposure around the facilities, and a rectangular area of wheat grass, remain until final reclamation is established.

The Cow Butte Central Unit also contains a substantially noticeable, man-made, earthen dam which covers .695 surface acres and impounds Upper Deep Gulch Reservoir in Section 14, T 16 N, R 90 W (see Photo 17). When the casual observer encounters the earthen dam and the remaining 26 reservoirs, the linear and textual contrast on the landscape attracts the attention of the observer to these obvious man-made modifications constructed with mechanized equipment.

The casual observer is often attracted to bodies of water while hiking. Water adds interest and diversity to the landscape. When arriving at the Upper Deep Gulch Reservoir, the casual observer would notice that it is not a natural lake and that they have encountered an impounded, muddy borrow pit. The hiker seeking refreshment from clean water, would quickly notice that this "reservoir" is designed for cattle operations where the water is unfit for human consumption or swimming. The casual observer would encounter a similar experience when seeking to replenish water supplies from other springs, wells, and reservoirs within this unit. The numerous range improvements, including one spring, 10 water wells, 14 fences, and 27 reservoirs, were, primarily, constructed for commercial grazing operations. These improvements give the casual observer a perception that they are visitors to a cattle range rather than a wilderness untrammelled by the works of man. While the presence of cattle is compatible with a natural landscape for

wilderness inventory purposes, the noticeable presence of numerous grazing-related developments in this unit is not.

In sum, the cumulative impacts on naturalness including the numerous oil and gas wells, primitive routes and wilderness inventory roads, and permanent range improvements have impaired the naturalness in the Cow Butte Central Unit to a level that is incompatible with the definitions of wilderness provided in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964 (incorporated in FLPMA 1976):

**A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.**

(3) Does the area or the remainder of the area (if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for solitude?

Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☒

Description:

(4) Does the area or the remainder of the area (if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation?

Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☒

Description:

(5) Does the area have supplemental values (ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational scenic or historical value)?

Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☒

Description:



## Summary of Analysis

**Area Name and/or Number: Cow Butte Central WY-030-16N90W34-2012**

### Summary

Results of analysis:

1. Does the area meet any of the size requirements? ☒ Yes ☐ No
2. Does the area appear to be natural? ☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ N/A
3. Does the area offer outstanding opportunities of solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A
4. Does the area have supplemental values? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A

Check one:

\_\_\_\_\_ The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as Land with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC).

\_\_X\_\_ The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

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**Reviewed by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dennis Carpenter, Field Manager

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_